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ABSTRACT

This paper reports the findings of a 2-year project based in the UK, which examined the perceptions and beliefs of disenfranchised pupils, their parents, school practitioners, and educational professionals about the causes and dynamics of disaffection from school. The study employed mainly qualitative methods (interviews and focus groups) to look within one school district in Northwest England at the current strategies and approaches being undertaken collaboratively by a multiple range of agencies, services, and schools to reduce the exclusion and disaffection of at-risk students. The study's sample consisted of the analysis of 12 projects and interviews with some 110 individuals, including 50 secondary school pupils, 20 local educators/practitioners, 15 parents, and 25 teachers and headteachers in primary and secondary schools. The paper: (1) discusses areas in which similar and conflicting perceptions arose between the various perspectives; (2) suggests areas for improving teacher practices and school policies; and (3) concludes that while disaffection is linked to a range of school- and teacher-based factors, the influence of systemic factors such as national government policies on curriculum, testing, assessment, and accountability also constitute an equally important dimension of the context in which disaffection occurs. The appendix contains a table and a summary of issues involved with pupil disaffection. (Contains 37 references, 5 tables, and 4 notes.) (Author/RT)

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"Bringing Disenfranchised Young People Back Into the Frame: A UK Perspective on Disaffection from School and the Curriculum"

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This paper reports the findings of a two-year research project based in the UK, which examined the perceptions and beliefs of disenfranchised pupils, their parents, school practitioners, and educational professionals about the causes and dynamics of disaffection from school. The study employed mainly qualitative methods (interviews and focus groups) to look within one school district in Northwest England at the current strategies and approaches being undertaken collaboratively by a multiple range of agencies, services, and schools to reduce the exclusion and disaffection of at-risk students. The study's sample consisted of the analysis of 12 projects and interviews with some 110 individuals, including 50 secondary school pupils, 20 local educators/practitioners, 15 parents; 25 teachers and headteachers in primary and secondary school. The paper: (1) discusses areas in which similar and conflicting perceptions arose between the various perspectives; (2) suggests areas for improving teacher practices and school policies; and (3) concludes that while disaffection is linked to a range of school- and teacher-based factors, the influence of systemic factors such national government policies on

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1 INTRODUCTION

A. Background

The topic of school disaffection is a problem thát has long concerned researchers interested in understanding the ways in which schooling and teaching are viewed and experienced by students who encounter difficulties and become disengaged with learning. In the UK, growing concern over rising levels of young people disaffected and excluded from mainstream education has been prompted by the national rise in school expulsion, truancy, and absenteeism rates (SEU, 1998; House of Commons, 1998; CRE, 1998). In England alone, the number of secondary school expulsions, for example, has increased dramatically from 2,500 expulsions in 1992 to nearly 13,500 in 1997 (Parsons, 1999).

Though recent reports have suggested that numbers are declining (SEU, 2001; Hayden and Dunne, 2001), the short- and long-term costs and consequences of being disenfranchised from education are still worrying[1], and continue to prompt policymakers, educators, and researchers to ask whether the phenomenon is unique to the country, or whether signs may be part of a wider global phenomenon. The answer, perhaps, is both. An increasingly global climate of competition and greater accountability has revealed similar trends of growing marginalization and exclusion of at-risk student populations in industrialised countries, such as the US (OECD, 1996). At the same time, our research suggests that school practitioners view the UK's particular educational climate and current national policies as being a crucial context to the problem, and therefore part of the explanation.

This paper highlights key themes and findings from a research study and project which examined how students, their parents, and school practitioners perceived the problem of school disaffection, and what they viewed as the factors in school and the curriculum which influenced how disenfranchised young people viewed and experienced learning. Though the paper is based on research conducted in the UK, we hope to suggest wider research implications that might resonate to other researchers in other countries facing similar challenges about disaffection. The paper is organised into five sections. Part 1 provides an introduction and explains the assumptions, which motivated and guided the research. Part 2 describes our research approach and methodology. Part 3 summarises our key research findings. Part 4 discusses our analysis and implications. Part 5 provides a conclusion and discusses recommendations.

B. Research assumptions

Several perspectives and assumptions underlie our research perspective and view of disaffection. Firstly, our perspective is largely situated within an educational view, and our interest in this paper lies in exploring the school-based dimensions of disaffection. We recognize, however, that the causes and dynamics of disaffection extend beyond schools and appreciate that the problem cannot simply be defined in terms of curriculum and pedagogy. Indeed, the wider forms of social exclusion are inextricably linked to a wider set of political, economic and social issues from which disengagement from leaning can arise. Such forms of social exclusion can include ill health, crime, unemployment, and poverty -- all of which have been viewed as exacerbating the situation in which an individual receives access to and experiences education (SEU, 1998). Though our research view takes this into account, we are largely guided by the view that there is considerable value, in terms of research, practice, and policy, in exploring further those factors and dynamics that occur within the context of schooling, teaching, and learning.

Our definition of a *disenfranchised young person*, therefore, is of an individual who has become and feels marginalized by the experience and process of learning, *for whatever reason*. The use of the term, "disenfranchised," in other words, implies that the reasons why a young person has become disaffected, disillusioned, or disengaged from learning extend well beyond the characteristics of a young person's personality or individual disposition. The notion of a "disenfranchised" young person provided us with the basis for directing our questions and methods at describing the wider, school context in which educational and schooling occurs, rather than attempting to explain disaffection in relation to behaviour or social background. This definition thus led us to focus on three particular groups of young people: 1) pupils who were had been suspended or expelled from school; 2) pupils who were at risk of leaving school with no qualifications; and 3) pupils who were truanting and/or not attending school regularly.

Our interest in focusing on the educational context in which a young person becomes *disenfranchised* from education raises a third assumption about how we view the causes of school disaffection. Historically, the past decades of research has supported the links between socio-economic status, social class, and school achievement (see e.g., Hess and Holloway, 1984). Studies conducted both in the UK and abroad have suggested that pupil background factors remain the strongest predictor of a pupil's performance in school. For

example, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1997) review of research on parental involvement in their children's education reported that:

> Hess and Holloway's (1984) review described as "overwhelming" the evidence for linkages between family socio-economic status and children's school achievement ... Others have suggested that the realities inherent in varied statuses influence the resources – such as income, time, energy, and community contacts – that parents bring to their involvement decision and influence (e.g. Baker & Stevenson, 1986; Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Hobbs et al., 1984; Lareau, 1987; 1989; McDermott, Goldman, & Varenne, 1984).

However, evidence from studies conducted in the US seems to suggest that a range of school-, curriculum-, and teacher-based factors can also exert a significant influence on students' performance in school. These factors include the influence of teachers, their training and professional development on student achievement (e.g. Darling-Hammond, 1999; Langer, 2000; Sanders and Rivers, 1996; Wright et al, 1997) as well as the influence of school and teacher practices on parental involvement (e.g. Bauch, 1993; Eccles & Harold, 1993; Epstein, 1986; 1991; 1994; and Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995).

In other words, an equally well established research view in the US is that social- and family-status variables cannot explain the *full* circumstances in which a young person may become disaffected from learning; nor can they explain why some young people appear to do well in school, in spite of difficult and presumably discouraging circumstances (e.g. Brody & Stoneman, 1992; Clark, 1983; Delgado-Gaitan, 1992; Eccles & Harold; 1993). Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1997) review suggests that although "status variables," such as social class, background, income can influence a family's limits and predispose a child to certain attitudes about education; "process variables," such as the opportunities made available to parents by schools and teachers are also powerful influences on parents' decisions to become involved in their children's education. Such evidence seems to suggest, in short, that a pupil's disaffection from school cannot and should not be explained by family and social status variables alone.

A review of current research on school disaffection in the UK, however, reveals a worrying and continuing tendency of relying upon behaviourist theories and models, which focus on status variables (i.e. pupil personality, social class, ethnicity, and family background), to explain student failure and disaffection, rather considering more closely the processes and factors that emanate from schools, teachers, and policy. Rustique-Forrester's (2000) review of the national rise in school exclusion, for example, concluded that most explanations for the

causes of expulsion and suspension were directed at attributing individual and group behaviour to pupil personality, family background, ethnicity, and social class, rather than school practices, teachers' pedagogy, or educational policy. While a psychological view and sociological model can contribute important insight about the behavioural and social correlates of disaffection, we wish to explore further the influence of schools and teachers.

Our concern with focusing on the individual behaviour and social attributes is in reinforcing a "deficit-model" of school disaffection, a view which suggests that the causes and problem lies largely with the individual student, rather than the wider context in which he or she learns.. Indeed, recent policy discussions in the UK about reducing or preventing disaffection have tended to focus on the perceived behavioural problems and entrenched social characteristics of pupils, their parents, and or their community, rather than consider the wider influences of educational policy, instruction, curriculum, and school environment learning (Rustique-Forrester, 1999, 2000).

A third and final view concerns the focus and scope of our findings. Although, as pointed out earlier, we suggest that that there are indications of an international context in which many industrialised countries are witnessing growing levels of social exclusion, our view is that notions of student "success," school "failure," as well as forms of exclusion are culturally specific. Young people in Denmark and Sweden, for example, cannot be formall y excluded (expelled) from school as they can be in the UK or US (Osler and Hill, 199; Parsons, 1999). Similarly, definitions of "school failure" can vary across different educational systems. The British notion of a "failing" school, for example, is one that has failed to meet national inspection standards, as judged by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED). For many other countries, the concept of a "failing" school is an alien one. In short, national as well as local definitions and policies regarding education constitute a crucial context in which we seek to understand the causes and dynamics of disaffection. In other words, the UK's educational system and national policies differ profoundly from the structures in the US and other countries. As such, the findings of our research should be cast within the specific context of the UK.

2 RESEARCH DESIGN AND PROJECT FRAMEWORK

A. Research context

The local picture

The specific local context for the research is "Northernshire," a local educational authority (LEA) located in Northwest England that commissioned and funded the project, in partnership with two local training and enterprise councils (TECs). The county is considered a large county compared with other LEAs in England. The region s upports over 600 schools. Local neighbourhoods and communities include a range of socially and ethnically diverse populations: old factory towns with high number of white unemployed males, affluent farming areas, faded seaside and fishing resorts, as well as urban centres with dense pockets of Asian (Pakistani and Indian) communities.

The research occurred in Northernshire for several reasons. Firstly, Northernshire had collaborated previously with several members of the research team (Centre for Educati onal Management, University of Surrey Roehampton) on a project involving the role and effectiveness of the LEA's services[2]. This project enabled the team firstly, access to schools and participants; and secondly, provided us with strong contacts with various professionals and agencies within Northernshire. We relied on such contacts to identify our research sample and to organise interviews and fieldwork. Finally, we had prior knowledge of the local issues and challenges facing the LEA, particularly in relation to social exclusion.

The national picture

The wider, national context is also a key part of the context in which our research was designed, funded, and conducted. This second contextual dimension is one in which the UK government has made issues of school standards and performance, as well as issues of social disaffection and exclusion, national priorities. The current UK educational policy context is also one aimed largely at raising standards and addressing issues of educational disadvantage. Framed by the 1997 Labour Government, the context in which teachers and schools currently operate is one reflective of a dizzying range of national policy initiatives. Examples include: a) national, government targets for raising pupils' academic achievement and reducing rates of exclusion, truancy, and absenteeism; b) new curriculum initiatives (National Literacy and National Numeracy) for improving rates of reading and maths; and c) national targets and programmes for combating truancy, exclusion and unemployment.[3] Thus, while the

government's educational agenda might be interpreted by some as having created new opportunities and resources for LEAs and schools, others have observed the overall climate as having created new demands and conflicting expectations for local practitioners and policymakers (e.g. Riley and Skelcher, 1998).

In developing the design of the project, and throughout the various research stages, we became keenly aware of the national pressures being felt by Northernshire LEA, its schools, and its services. Pressures included an upcoming national (OFSTED) inspection of the LEA as well as changes in the funding of educational and social services for special educational needs. This highly dynamic terrain thus prompted many LEAs, such as Northernshire, to look towards current policies and practices regarding social exclusion and disaffection. Thus, while senior members of the Northernshire LEA and other agencies commissioned the research; the project could also be viewed as an example of a local response to a national government agenda for achieving social inclusion. The LEA, in formulating its response, sought our help in conducting a review of current projects and assessing the views of a range of perspectives, with the overall aim of and identifying future areas and goals for local policy. From this initial review and activity, the project's research design emerged.

B. Research questions and objectives

Three basic questions served as starting point and framework for the various stages and phases of the project. These included:

- What groups of young people are "disenfranchised" from school and the curriculum?
- What are the factors that contribute to their exclusion and disaffection from school and learning?
- What strategies and approaches are being tried, successfully or unsuccessfully to try and address the various dimensions of the problem?

In seeking an answer to these questions within our research view and assumption, we wanted to capture a range of views. This included examining the experiences of young people, their parents, and contrasting these with the perceptions of those professionals who work with them (teachers, headteachers, and others from educational agencies and social services). We wanted to find out what factors were perceived to make a difference – either positive or negative – on how disenfranchised students viewed and experienced school.

We thus began our research by first conducting a set of initial research activities to understand better the current field of research as well as to establish the scale of disaffection, nationally and in the county. These activities included: 1) a research and policy literature review on school exclusion (Rustique-Forrester, 2000); and 2) a review of LEA practices and policies on social inclusion.[4] Following these preliminary research activities, we then developed in partnership with the LEA, the stages and aims of our research. These were carried out in three linked and emergent stages:

- **Stage 1 – Who are the disenfranchised?**
  Our aim: To examine the scale of disaffection in Northernshire and the ways in which current programs and initiatives aimed at tackling forms of school disaffection and exclusion were working; and

- **Stage 2 – What are the factors that contribute to disaffection?**
  Our aim: To explore the perceptions and experiences of young people, their parents, and the range of school practitioners and education-based professionals whose efforts were aimed at tackling disaffection; and

- **Stage 3 – What recommendations might improve local policies and practices?**
  Our aim: To identify areas, elements and features of 'effective' practice, which the LEA might wish to consider in developing future policy.

C. Research strategy and approach

As alluded to in our earlier discussion of the context in which the project occurred, the dynamic nature of the national policy climate meant that the LEA's needs were constantly evolving vis-à-vis the central government's educational agenda. Even in the early stages of design and negotiating access to data, the LEA's priorities began to shift in response to new government requirements and pressures, which thus affected a wide range of agencies within the LEA. We thus felt that rather than adhere to a rigidly, pre-defined design, it was more important to adapt a flexible, emergent, and loosely defined research style.

Using this type of developmental and emergent approach enabled us to be responsive to the needs of the LEA as well as to our emerging data. This allowed us to refine and adapt our methods to pursue particular lines of inquiry. It also allowed us to maintain to conduct our

research in partnership, a goal to which we adhered strongly in conducting commissioned research. For example, we shared our findings and discussed our analysis at various stages of our research we members of the LEA and other educational professionals. An illustration of our overall research framework and its various phases is shown in Diagram 2.1. This diagram explains the various stages and sub-phases of our research.

Given our particular views about the causes of disaffection, the range of student, parent, and practitioner perspectives we sought to explore, and the complexity of the information we wished to obtain, we agreed, through a series of discussions with the LEA, to base our research approach on multiple sources of data. This data was collected by various methods and included a range of perspectives, which are summarised in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1
Summary of Data Collection Methods

Perspective	Method of data collection	Purpose
Students	Focus groups Drawings	To explore secondary school students' perceptions of the experience of school, teachers, and efforts (e.g. external agencies and programmes to help them in school).
Parents	Focus groups Individual interviews	To explore how the parents of children experiencing difficulties in school perceived the role and influence of school, teachers, and educational professionals.
School practitioners	Focus groups Individual interviews	To explore the issues that teachers and headteachers associated with school disaffection and their perceptions of what changes in practices and policies are needed.
Educational professionals	Document review Individual interviews Focus groups	To explore the issues that educational professionals associated with school disaffection and their perceptions of what changes in practices and policies are needed.

D. Research methods and sample

We employed largely qualitative methods to collect and analyse data. These included: a) a document analysis of project descriptions and evaluations, b) focus groups; c) student drawings; and d) semi-structured individual interviews with students, parents, and teachers. The methods by which we selected participants and projects comprised of an opportunity-based sample. The main reason for this was due to limitations in time and resources.

Although we defined the criteria for selecting the research sample – a range of schools from a mixture of areas in various regions of Northernshire -- we relied heavily on the LEA and its staff to contact individuals and organise the venues where interviews took place. Secondly, we felt that it more important to focus our efforts on obtaining a range of views, rather than seeking a representational or random sample. Our intention was not to make st atements about the general population, but rather to explore and compare the issues raised by each of the various perspectives. Our sample comprised of the following:

Students

Our sample of students comprised of 45 secondary school students between the ages of 12 and 15. Pupils who were perceived to be experiencing ac ademic or behavioural difficulties in school, who were attending school irregularly, and/or who had been excluded from school were nominated by schools and contacted by education welfare officers. Five focus groups were set up in various areas of Northernshire and comprised of approximately eight to ten pupils each. A member of the research team and an education welfare officer jointly facilitated interviews.

Parents

The sample of parents comprised of 18 parents whose children attended two primary schools, 2 secondary schools, and one Pupil Referral Unit. One mother included a secondary school child who had been excluded from school, and had not attended a school for several months. Parents were identified as individuals whose children were having difficulties with school and were selected by educational professionals who knew and contacted them through social and educational services. The group comprised mainly of mothers, and one fathe r. Data was collected from parents using a range of interview styles, which included three focus groups and two semi-structured individual interviews.

School Practitioners and Educational Professionals

The views of teachers, headteachers, and professionals working in a range of educational services and agencies comprised of the third and fourth perspectives included in our fieldwork. This sample comprised of 20 professionals (e.g. from Educational Welfare Service, School Advisory Service, Youth and Comm unity Service) and 32 school practitioners from over a dozen secondary and primary schools.

Our research approach was firmly grounded in the view that we could further explore the underlying dynamics of disaffection by examining each of these four perspectives. We subscribed to the belief that young people are a central, 'expert' voice in describing their educational experience (Ruddock et al, 1996) and thus a necessary perspective in answering questions about whether certain policies, programmes and initiatives, designed to tackle school exclusion and disengagement, appeared to be working. Similarly, we believed that the views and perceptions of parents were equally important for identifying the factors in the school that exacerbated a young person's disaffection from learning, Moreover, parents could provide a unique perspective about their interactions and communications with their child's school and teachers (Hallgarten, 2000). While we recognised that parents' descriptions of their child's experience in school would be limited to the extent that they were involved and aware (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 1997), our interviews with students revealed that they often discussed with their parents their struggles and dislikes in school. This led us to conclude that parents were aware of school-based issues, and therefore provided a valuable perspective. Our rationale for including the perspectives of school practitioners and educational professionals was mainly to follow-up on the issues raised by pupils and parents. We were also particularly interested in exploring how schools perceived pupils and parents, and how practitioners viewed the central government's pressures to raise achievement vis-à-vis disaffection.

E. Data analysis

We used a content analysis of interview transcripts, notes, and drawings to compare and contrast the views of pupils, parents, school practitioners, and educational professionals. Our analysis focused on four areas of school-based factors: 1) teachers and teaching; 2) the features and characteristics of schools; 3) the curriculum, including structures, policies and programmes; and 4) local initiatives and approaches aimed at tackling exclusion and disaffection. This paper focuses on three of the four perspectives – students, parents, and school practitioners. The perspective of educational professionals will be described in a forthcoming book (Riley and Rustique-Forrester, in press).

3 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

We have chosen in this paper to focus our discussion on a particular strand of our findings: Students', parents', and school practitioners' perceptions about the role and influence of teachers, pedagogy; the school (we focus on school-parent communication and behaviour policies); and the curriculum. Major parts of this discussion draw from a previous paper (Riley and Rustique-Forrester, 2000), in which we discuss more generally the themes raised by each of the perspectives. A table and summary of these specific issues can be found in Appendix A.

Findings (1) - Teachers

In our interviewees, we asked students, parents, and school practitioners to describe those school-based factors which they perceived might be important to a young person, particularly for an individual with difficulties learning and who disliked school. We explained to participants that we wanted to find out what factors might make a positive difference for preventing and reducing disaffection; and conversely, those factors which might aggravate a student's problems.

Across each of the four perspectives, teachers – their attitudes, practices, and interactions with students and parents -- were identified as one of the most important factors in the classroom. The various themes, which are described in students 'and parents' interviews, is discussed more fully in an earlier paper, Riley and Rustique-Forrester (2000). We focus here on two particular aspects: 1) teachers' personal characteristics, such as their personality, their style of interaction and temperament; and 2) teachers' pedagogical and classroom practices.

A. Students' views

As mentioned earlier, the students we interviewed comprised of individuals who were identified on because of their perceived problems with school, attendance, and behaviour. Students' reasons for either liking or disliking school overwhelmingly involved descriptions of teachers, their pedagogical styles, and their personal interactions.

"Good" versus "bad" teachers

We asked students about the kinds of teachers who had positive influence on them in school, and those whose classes they enjoyed attending. Conversely, we asked them about those teachers who were felt to be negative. Students responded with descriptions of individuals

with whom they felt they could personally identify and more critically, did not judge or perceive them as a failure. "Nice" teachers were described as "acting human,'" "laughing," "smiling,", "making jokes," and "sometimes strict, but fair to everyone." "Good" teachers were described as those who 'explained things well' and demonstrated a sense of fairness, equity, and humanity. Students provided accounts of teachers who '"took the time to help" and "treated you like a person," and not "like a baby." Teachers who were viewed as having a positive effect on learning were described as helping students make connections between the classroom, their daily lives, and their personal interests. Students explained that they liked going to their classes "cos you feel good [when you are there]" and because "you actually learn something in their lessons." "Good" teachers were not perceived as "just easy teachers, "cos," as one student believed, "no one wouldn't respect them."

The other side of the coin were those teachers who students described as having a negative influence on their experience in school. These teachers were described as "shouting all the time" and "talking at" (versus "with") students. According to students, "bad" teachers did not show an attempt to relate with students as individuals; and were negative in their attitudes toward students. Examples of bad teachers were legion. "Bad" teachers were viewed as having an "explosive tempers," "shrill voices," and in several extreme cases, physically manhandled students, "grabbing" them by the neck, shoulder or arm. One 12-year old student described how one teacher had poked her on the forehead and called her a "stupid little pest."

A summary of students' perceptions of good and bad teachers is shown below in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1
Students' perceptions of "good" and "bad" teachers

'Good" teachers were described as:	'Bad" teachers were seen as:
• Helpful and supportive; • Taking the time to explain material in-depth; • Friendly and personable; • Understanding and knowing their subject well; • Using a variety of teaching styles and innovative approaches; • Fair and having equal standards and expectations for pupils, regardless of their test scores; • Willing to reward pupils for progress.	• Mean and unfair; • Unwilling to help or explain material and ideas beyond instruction; • Judgmental of pupils' parents and siblings; • Routine and unchanging in their teaching styles and methods; • Inflexible and disrespectful of pupils; • Unaware of, and unsympathetic to pupils' personal problems; • Physically intimidating and verbally abusive.

Students suggested those teachers' empathy, their willingness to help, and patience with difficult behaviour and irregular attendance had a positive influence in helping them cope with their struggles and difficulties with school, particularly after a period of absence. Few students, however, provided examples of feeling welcomed back by teachers upon their return to class. Most described receiving sarcastic comments from teachers such as: "Oh you have finally decided to join us today then, have you?" One male student described being told that he "should just go back home," which he did. According to another student, his teacher "welcomed" back his friend and classroom, also a long-term truant, by encouraging the class to clap – slowly. An overwhelming number of descriptions of students' re-entry into school after a period of absence was described as a personally alienating and humiliating experience, and attempts to re-integrate pupils back into the curriculum did not appear to be aided by specific supports. Students described teachers who were willing to help them make up for lost time as rare.

Other personal characteristics that students felt to be significant factors were teachers' age and their level of preparation and training. For example, a number of older students felt that some teachers were "too old," and "needed to retire." Several perceived younger teachers as being more understanding and "up to date" in the classroom. One 15-year old student suggested that many teachers in her school did not seem prepared for the task of teaching "difficult students like us," explaining, "I think [teachers] ... need to take courses to teach better." Others described teachers whose lessons "didn't make sense," "who didn't come to class prepared," and "who made things up and they went along."

B. Parents' views

Parents also perceived their children's teachers as having a crucial influence on how their child experienced school. Parents' descriptions appeared to draw upon direct encounters and communications with headteachers and teachers, as well as on stories and reports that they received from their children. For parents, a major factor was whether or not they felt that the teacher "cared" for their child. Although "caring" was often described in highly individual, personal terms, there were common themes in parents' comments. For example, many described teachers who had had a positive influence in terms of "how well they knew my child," "how willing they were to help him," "whether they were willing to give her a chance." One mother, for example, explained that "teachers knowing about what my child liked and disliked" was far more important that "what he or she knew about the subject."

Whether or not a teacher was perceived to care seemed to be more important to parents, however, than the teacher's professional background or qualifications in his subject.

Parents also suggested that teachers were important because they provided information about their child's progress and problems in school. However, a number of parents described difficulties in finding ways to communicate with individual teachers. Many mothers of secondary school students described being unsure of how to contact an individual teacher with whom their child had experienced a problem, and there were many stories of having to go through the headteacher who was perceived as "defending the teacher," or "taking the teachers' sides." Other difficulties included not knowing how to follow- up. For example, one mother explained that she told the headteacher of a continuing problem with one particular teacher, but that she "didn't know how or if it ever got dealt with."

C. School practitioners' views

School practitioners also viewed teachers as being an important factor, however, their views about the personal and professional characteristics of teachers which were important in responding to the needs of disenfranchised students, varied far more widely than those described by students and parents.

When we asked school practitioners about the personalities and characteristics of teachers that were most important to students and parents, there was far less agreement than students and parents. While students and parents commonly described "good" teachers as "caring" and friendly; school practitioners rarely used such terms, and seemed reluctant to define "good." The sentiments of one teacher, who explained, "It's difficult to define an excellent teachers," was a common conclusion amongst many we interviewed. For example, some suggested that having a wide range of imaginative teaching styles was needed for preventing disengagement from learning. According to one headteacher, self-confidence in the classroom was key in combating disaffection. It was important, she explained, that staff "didn't take challenge and poor response [from students] personally." Others suggested that teachers needed to be "consistent" in how they treated students because, as one teacher explained, pupil behaviour was "more testing than in the past" and that "access to technology could change the balance of power between teacher and pupil." Teachers needed to be "innovative" and "willing to take risks," suggested another headteacher, who explained: "A willingness *(for teachers)* to take risks is important. Staffs sometimes [need] to think of the most outlandish ways possible to teach their subject. But encouraging staff to develop a wide

range of pedagogical skills is more difficult now – they are too exhausted to put their neck on the line."

An area in which students, parents, and school practitioners expresse d common views was through descriptions of how "bad teaching" and "difficult teachers" often aggravated the problems of a young person. "Uninspiring" teaching and "uncaring" attitudes were seen as leading to personality clashes between students and teachers, and exacerbating the kinds of behaviour that often led to exclusion and truancy. School practitioners suggested that colleagues' negative attitudes and limited experience could worsen the problems experienced by disaffected young people. One teacher, for example, said that she knew of one teacher who "didn't like children." Another teacher added that, 'Many schools have a number of disaffected staff – especially those ingrained in a style of delivery no longer relevant – they find it very difficult to cope with lack of respect and anti -establishment views."

There were frequent descriptions of colleagues who were "disaffected themselves" and according to one teacher, "did not treat pupils with respect." Another teacher defined disaffected teachers as a hard core who were "difficult to move." One teacher explained, 'There is one in every school . . . you know who they are, and you're not sure why they are teaching. I can think of one teacher in our school, and she just doesn't like children. And I feel sorry for her students. ... I wouldn't want to be in her class." However, the overwhelming majority of those we interviewed typically felt that, it was "hard to challenge these colleagues about how they choose to handle a disruptive student."

The kind of caring, empathetic teacher that students and parents described as being helpful was put forth to teachers and headteachers for their reaction. Several school practitioners and educational professionals similarly suggested that such characteristics teachers were particularly important:

> Seeing pupils as individuals ... [and] having empathy with them is very, very important. In terms of what makes a good teacher, it is having that empathy with pupils. It's also getting on their wavelength as well and being able to relax when it is appropriate and having a sense of humour. But it's also about good planning of what the lesson's going to be about and what you think the pupils are going to get out of it ...you've got to be flexible, too ... this point about the kid saying nobody understands me, nobody understands my problems. It can actually be built into the lesson...it's about body language, the language you use to pupils.

However, others questioned whether it was realistic, in terms of time and effectiveness, to be this kind of teacher. Here again, concerns were raised by school practitioners about balancing the needs of the individual with the rest of the class, and also addressing the needs of the class as a whole group. A common dilemma described by teachers was not having enough time to spend with a single pupil, especially one who required much attention when there were competing pressures such as preparing the class for exams, or according to some, "getting ready for inspection." In these scenarios, school practitioners' comments suggested that it was thus difficult for teachers to be tolerant and patient toward a single student, especially one who was disruptive, appeared unmotivated, or attended school irregular ly.

Findings (2) - Pedagogy and classroom practices

Pedagogy and classroom practices comprised of a second area perceived as having an influence on the experience of disaffected young people. This section focuses on how students and parents described teachers' expectations of students and the instructional methods used in the classroom. Two issues featured strongly in students' and parents' views: one-on-one styles of interactions and negative labelling. We then pursued these issues with school practitioners.

A. Students' views

Teachers whose pedagogical methods emphasized and included an individualized approach of interaction and instruction was described as having a pos itive effect on their experience in school. A common theme of teachers whose lesson students liked involved the perception of an individual approach to learning. "She always asked you if everything was alright," described one student. "He remembered the kinds of things you liked, or had trouble with learning," explained another. "She didn't single you out in front of the whole class ... but would talk to you in private," was another comment.

Many students also expressed a preference toward teachers whose pedagogy included a wide definition of "success" and who praised their efforts and progress, rather than measured their achievement against others. Students seemed particularly critical of teachers who had rigidly defined expectations and teaching styles. There was also an expressed appreciation for a range of classroom techniques and methods. For example, one pupil described that it was impossible to do well for one teacher for whom "everything must be right.... or you received no credit."

Students also suggested that it was helpful to know and understand why they were learning about a particular topic. Several described truanting from school and skipping specific classes on days when they expected the lesson to be "boring." When we probed about their perceptions of a "boring" lesson, students defined this in terms of content as well as pedagogy. "Boring" was viewed as a topic or lesson for which there was either "too much information" or the goal was unclear. "Boring" was also described as "doing the same thing over and over again," "copying things off the board," "not having any purpose," and "not being taught properly." In both a content- and pedagogical- sense, students perceived that attending such classes provided them with little incentive to learn. One student described asking his teacher why they had to learn about a particular topic: 'Why do we need to learn this I want to know?' he recounted with some emotion and almost anger, but "no one could tell me except, cos you have to."

Many students' explanations for disliking school were underscored by a perception of being labelled as "troublemakers." Several believed that teachers and headteachers wanted to "get them out" of school. For example, in one panel, several students claimed that teachers treated them like "lost causes" and "were happy for [students] to be isolated" from others "so that that rest of the school could get on with the lesson" without interruption. Another form of labelling described by students included the perception that they were "expected to fail," "dumb," and "stupid." Many students expressed the view that once they, and other students, had got into a downward spiral of bad behaviour, exclusion, and non-attendance, the chances of achieving in the school were almost nil. In one panel, six out of ten students claimed that at some time they had been in at least one or two of the top ability sets, but that once they had '"fallen down, it was hard to get back up." A feeling frequently described by students from all the schools were that very little was expected from them. Students characteristically described their schools as "not listening to us or what we would like." One male student simply said, "My school thinks I'm dumb." Another student, who had been in the top set for five subjects but whose poor behaviour had caused him to be demoted said, 'I don't give a f... now. They're not going to let me get any GCSEs so I just p... about'. One girl said that in her school 'teachers don't give you a chance: my sister had the whole of Year 10 off, ... she's now back in Year 11 and they're saying that she's only going to get C's and D's in her GCSEs'.

B. Parents' views

Compared with students, parents offered less detailed comments about teachers' pedagogy. It Parents also expressed a wider set of beliefs and views about the kind of teaching styles that they believed was best for their child ranged widely. Some parents felt that a "strict, consistent approach" was needed. Others believed that a "flexible, open approach" was better. However, a common view of both parents and students was the necessity of teachers' recognising and building upon child's strengths and weaknesses. A number of parents expressed an appreciation for teachers who "did not focus only on the negative," but "also saw the positive."

An overwhelming number of parents also felt that labelling negatively affected their child's expectations and experience in school. Several parents provided accounts of the process of labelling (of them and their children) by school staff. A number of mothers described particular events that had humiliated their child, and triggered bad behaviour that contributed to a downward spiral. For example, at various stages in one panel discussion, one mother pieced together the following story about her son:

> The teacher put a label on his back, 'Don't talk to this boy, he bites'. He was six at the time! He didn't want to go to school. ... She had a stack of notices and she kept them near her desk, but you couldn't see them when you went into the classroom. ... I spoke to the headteacher and he spoke to my lad in assembly. He made him stand up. He said, 'Your mum doesn't want you to have a label on, but it's up to you to behave!'. ... The problem was he couldn't read, but they made him feel stupid. When he was nine, they said he was dyslexic but he had no help for a long time. ... The teacher who did that to him finally went from the school, but it wasn't because of what she did to my lad.

Though few parents offered strong opinions about teachers' specific instructional methods, many suggested that a teacher's expectations of their child was a key factor in how the child experienced learning in the classroom. Although most parents appeared unsure about the kinds of pedagogy that worked best for their child, a common perception and belief was that teaching methods "should build on an individual's strengths ... as well as his or her weaknesses." As with students, the conclusion of many parents was that, all too often, teachers were perceived as emphasizing student failure rather than progress.

C. School practitioners' views

The topic of classroom pedagogy and classroom methods raised varying and contentious opinions amongst teaches and headteachers, who unlike students and parents, expressed less agreement about the kinds of classroom practices that could have a positive impact on disaffection. For example, primary and secondary teachers expressed differing views about the extent to which it was possible and desirable for teachers to adopt individu alized methods of instructions. Primary teachers, for example, felt that in secondary school, the focus of teachers' attention shifted more to their subject, and away from the student's individual needs. Some secondary teachers, however, felt that because of the national curriculum, exams, and the structure of how teachers were organised by subject, their practices needed to be more subject-driven rather than to student-based. Although teachers from both phases of schooling seemed to agree that students who were disaffected were likely to benefit more from classroom environments that provided more individualized help, opinions varied about the extent to which this was possible due to the structures and timetables of schools; constraints in resources, staffing, time, and curriculum pressures.

The problem of labelling by schools and teachers raised a more unified set of concerns. Practitioners from both phases suggested similar and strong links between labelling and the disengagement. One headteacher's reaction was, "I think they're right. There is a lot of labelling." However, teachers across schools felt that labelling was difficult to detect and prevent. "It comes in all forms," explained one teacher, and was "difficult to control," especially amongst colleagues. Another replied, "Yes, labelling happens, but it is subtle, and hard to confront when it is your colleague." Most of the headteachers we interviewed said they "tried hard to avoid negative labelling" and encouraged staff, as well as pupils a nd parents to have high expectations for achievement, but believed that, "changing expectations is hard when you've been seen as a low achieving school for so long." Raising and changing teachers' expectations was described by headteachers as difficult. On e headteacher described her concern when her staff suggested that expectations were too high: "I said no, they're not because if you look, we're compared with like schools and they're doing considerably better. ... But it's very, very difficult to turn their perceptions round as they are feeling extremely overworked and I'm just adding more pressure."

Teachers concluded that a wide range of classroom and school strategies was needed to address disaffection, and suggested that those aimed at enabling teachers to spend more time and "get to know" their pupils were most valuable. These views were expressed by a panel of teachers who were involved in a project aimed at under-achieving students. Others, such as primary teachers, looked favorably toward the addi tional support provided by classroom

assistants as well as by parents, which allowed them to spend more time with students who needed help. Said one teacher, "Every child, whether he or she is disaffected or not .... Needs to have an individualized learning plan, which includes the extra support that he or she needs, whether it is counselling or otherwise." At the secondary level, however, fewer comments seemed directed at using more individual styles of instruction. Although a number of secondary practitioners felt that such practices could change within the school and the classroom, most of those we interviewed looked toward external agencies and programmes to provide the individual support, which was aimed at providing counselling, behaviour support, or vocational curriculum.

Findings (3) - The school

The influence of the school itself emerged strongly as a theme in how each perspective viewed the issues related to disaffection, and various aspects and features of schools were described as having both positive and negative effects on disenfranchised young people. We focus this discussion on two particular issues: 1) communication between parents and schools; and 2) policies and structures aimed at improving behaviour and school discipline.

Communication

A. Students' views

The frequency and type of communication that occurred between their school and parents was described by students as being important, with a number suggesting that it was helpful to have their parents involved, particularly when they were having difficulty with a teacher. However, an overwhelming majority of students suggested in their comments: 1) that their parents did not like coming to school and felt unwelcome in the school; and 2) that their parents knew of the problem; but didn't know what they could do to help.

For example, one student described and explained in a drawing an incident with a teacher upon which she told her mother. Her drawing depicted the two of them walking to school to discuss the matter with the teacher, but then walking away frustrated because they were unable to talk to the teacher, but instead met with the headteacher who "just told me and my mum about all the bad things I had done." Students described that labelling made communications between their school and parents difficult and sometimes hostile, particularly for those whose parents had a negative experience of school. One female student simply stated, "My mum hated it and I am just like her." Another student (whose parents had

previously attended his school) said that a member of staff had told him, "Your parents were no good, and you're no good either."

B. Parents' views

The parents we interviewed described similar problems and difficulties communicating with the school, and identified the school's leadership, management, and organisational culture (e.g. personality and style of the headteacher, the level of communication with parents, and the attitudes of staff) as being key factors. Like students, many parents felt that schools were not particularly welcoming places and described their encounters and communications as being negative. Parents who described their child's school as "unwelcoming" provided examples of "only receiving bad news," "getting cold letters where my name was misspelled," or "having hardly any communication between me and the teachers about how my child was doing." Several parents described being called into the school to discuss their child's behaviour, which, for one mother, was a humiliating experience:

> They never had anything good to say about him, no matter how small. Parent evenings were terrible. Them and us! I thought the days of boot camp had ended, but when I got to the school I saw the way they dealt with him in isolation – it was every bit as bad.

Parents seemed to associate members of the school's senior management (i.e. the headteacher or deputy headteacher) with being the primary source of communication, rather than teachers. Several parents, however, suggested that more direct communication with teachers could be helpful firstly, for understanding the kinds of problems that their child was experiencing; and secondly, for being more directly involved and supportive. For example, one mother described her experience in a programme called "Parents as Educators" as helping her to become more aware of the difficulties that teachers faced and also to understand the various assessments and stages of the curriculum. Yet, very few parents described similar experiences; the majority perceived little opportunities for becoming involved and saw few ways of communicating positively with their child's teachers.

C. School practitioners' views

The views of school practitioners revealed negative views about parents and strong opinions about the problems of communicating with parents. Although interviewees described parental involvement as "necessary" and "sometimes helpful," a number of headteachers and teachers did not perceive this as having a positive influence.

For example, one interviewee stated that: "A generation of parents coming through are anti - school … they give no support to school and are prepared to challenge and always take the pupil's side – and the pupil knows this." Another said: 'For some *(parents)* education is not only not valued but seen as an encumbrance – it can prevent all sorts of useful things like shopping and staying in with parents, getting to work and bringing money into the family." A number of headteachers felt that parents of disaffected young people often had little understanding of their children and were unable to support them emotionally. One group of teachers from a secondary school that, "Often the parents will call *us* asking for help with their child. When we experience difficulty with pupils, it is almost always the case that the child's parent is having difficulty at home. Parents in schools like ours have little or no understanding of how complex children are." One secondary school teacher described it, "Any talk of education as preparation for life, has no meaning" [for these parents] and "no meaning for their children."

School policies

A second area in which schools were seen as having an influence on disaffection emerged in descriptions of the kinds of policies used by schools to address the behavioural problems and learning needs of disaffected students.

A. Students' views

Students' descriptions of school policies to dissuade or punish particular types of behaviour included: writing lines; receiving detention; being sent home; being sent to isolation; being sent into the corridor (hall). Those we interviewed, however, described such policies, however, as "not making sense" and being ineffective at improving their attitudes toward learning. A common theme was that punishments (those mentioned most often were detention and isolation) made students feel worse about their school, rather than better. For example, one student described his experience in "isolation" (a small room where he was sent to sit all day) as making him so angry that he "never wanted to come back." According to another group of students from one school, their school's "code of conduct" was that of a piece of paper taped on the wall of every classroom. One student explained: "It says, DO NOT SPEAK UNLESS SPOKEN TO. DO NOT GET UP OUT OF YOUR CHAIR WITHOUT PERMISSION." Another students added, "There is a whole list of things that start with do not … or we get demerits… which the teacher writes down on the board."

When asked what type of support and help from teachers was available in their school to help them with their problems in school, few students provided examples of non- punitive forms of response. Only one group of students (from one school) described receiving counselling support and the opportunity to talk with a teacher. In contrast to how most of the student described their school, two of these students described their school as a "caring" place. One explained, "When you are having trouble in a class, the teachers will talk with you afterwards and find out what's bothering you ... if they think you need more time to talk, they'll ask to see you after school. But it's not punishment."

B. Parents' views

The majority of parents we interviewed felt that schools should take appropriate sanctions for disruptive behaviour and have clear policies on behaviour. However, a number also felt that certain punishment regimes did not encourage their children to take responsibility for their own behaviour. According to several mothers, the punitive approach adopted by the schools put them on the defensive and aggravated the poor relationships between schools and parents. One mother explained, "What they didn't understand is that when they knock him down and don't say anything good about him, all you can do is speak up for him. ... They don't see that they have any responsibility for what has happened." Other parents felt that while such punishments might work in the short-term, in the long-term, they did little to alleviate the resentment felt toward particular teachers and school. A particular example given was the "isolation policy" that had been introduced by a number of schools. Pupils who misbehaved were put in an isolation room (or 'ice' as many of the pupils referred to it in their interviews and in their drawings). Pupils in 'ice' were separated from other students throughout the school day. As one mother described it:

> I went up to the school. He was in isolation in a tiny room on his own. I said to them, 'You can't put him in here, it is like a prison'. ... You have got to punish them, but not like that. ... Make them clear the rubbish from the playground of not play football if they act like that. ... The isolation policy doesn't help. When they miss lessons, they feel even more of a problem.

However, some parents described several school policies and structures as hav ing a positive impact on their child and encouraging their involvement in his or her education. These included 1) accounts of teachers who made "the odd phone call to say something nice about my child;' 2) descriptions of a community worker or liaison who attended meetings with parent; and 3) a "parent's room" which made them feel welcome.

C. School practitioners' views

School practitioners' views about behaviour policies and punishments revealed mixed opinions about how schools should respond to increasing signs of disaffection, particularly when it involved the perception of disruptive behaviour. One panel of teachers from several schools were surprised by the range of school approaches to behaviour, which seemed to vary greatly between and across schools. Some schools' policies were described by teaches as being "flexible," when meant that rewards and punishments were different for different students in different situations. Other policies, however, tended to emphasize "uniformity" and "consistency," which one teacher described as "a bit easy for staff to follow, procedure - wise" but "more difficult for pupils to cope with."

In discussing how schools responded to the signs of disaffection, teachers' descriptions of policies fell into three categories: punishments and sanctions for disruptive behaviour; rewards for progress; and programmes for support. Views about the effectiveness of how punishments such as detention, isolation, and writing lines worked ranged widely, from "fairly straightforward," "outdated," "like most schools," "pretty good," to "complex and difficult to explain." However, like students and parents, teachers also admitted that such mechanisms had mixed effect. Teachers also described a number of unintended consequences that arose from the use of certain types of punishments. For example, one teacher described an incident with a student who "saw isolation as a positive thing" because it meant that both his parents (who were separated) came to his school. The teacher described: "I monitored that room, and his eyes would light up when his parents called." Another teacher cited another instance when a student who came into the class went straight to her desk and asked for "a pink card," which meant that she would be removed from class and sent to a specially monitored room.

School practitioners suggested that a school culture based on rewards and praise offered a more appealing way of interacting with students and could be a more potentially effective strategy than sanctions and punishments. Several teachers from one school described that their approach to reducing disaffection and resisting exclusion was to build positive communications and relationships, which one said is "a lot more hard work, but better than "just punishing and punishing." One teacher explained, "As pupils get older, the same rewards that worked for younger pupils don't seem to work as effectively ... they seem to associate with the younger kids and lose interest." He and a colleague described sending letters home "every now and then just praising the pupil." His colleague also added, "You

need to start with the relationship…it is a building block, you must get them to believe that you like them as a person … get them on your side." "Telling a low- ability pupil that the or she is a shining superstar … that their work is fantastic .. really works," explained another.

Findings (4) - The curriculum

Curriculum-based factors comprised of a third area that students, parents, and school practitioners perceived as having an important influence on disaffection. A number of concerns were raised by each perspective about the ways in which the curriculum was structured, adapted, and used in schools.

A. Students' views

The comments made by students about the curriculum revealed a range of frustrations with the pace, content, and goals of the curriculum. One set of views was directed at the pace in which the curriculum was taught. This included comments that "teachers went too fast" and that "one day we was doing this thing, and the next day was something different … it didn't make sense … and I didn't understand." Another set of comments was directed at the content of lessons, which was perceived as irrelevant. Many students viewed school as something that "you have to do," and the curriculum as something that "you didn't necessarily need." Very few students perceived the school curriculum as providing interesting information or helping expand their future options. Others felt that the goals of the curriculum were not clear, and that going to school and learning was "all about exams."

The students we interviewed suggested the curriculum was not important because, for them, the world of work was an option that immediately followed school. As one female explained, "If I don't do well in school, I'll just find a job or go on the dole." "I don't need school or qualifications," another male student stated. "School should end earlier so I can just start working." One pupil said, "Six hours of getting hassles from teachers in enough. Why go to activities to get more?" Few students mentioned the prospects of further or higher education, attending college or university. Students' perceptions of the curriculum were defined in terms of examinations that helped you get a job. There were few comments expressed by pupils about the intrinsic worth of the curriculum, or about any notions of enrichment or preparation for life in the broadest sense. Suggestions for more practical or additional activities outside of school were met with little enthusiasm. One student said, "It means you

are stupid and not good enough to take exams." Other comments seemed to suggest that students knew that they had been tracked and streamed into low-ability classes. For example, several pupils hinted that if they were in the "right" courses, then education "might be worth having."

Students did, however, express positive views about teachers who attempted to adapt the curriculum and who "made the lessons more interesting," "took the time to explain things ," and also expressed support for curriculum activities and programs that provided them with "extra help." Tutoring and opportunities to experience success outside of school were also viewed favorably by students.

B. Parents' views

Parents' comments about the curriculum were more limited than described by students. Although the parents we interviewed were aware of assessments and tests, they did not seem highly aware of the specific content or structure of the curriculum. Parents' perceptions of the curriculum included some discussion about the pressures of exams and tests, which some felt had "negative" effects on their child. These comments included perceptions that such pressures "caused my daughter to be stressed," "means that he won't do well on tests," and "being scared." Parents' unclear views about the curriculum were underscored by the feelings of not knowing how to support their child when he or she experienced particular difficulties in school, or needed help on a particular subject. One mother said, "I never finished school myself, and I didn't feel I could help my child in maths. I asked him whether he could ask his teacher for extra help." Other parents describing not knowing how to keep up with what their child was learning in school: "It's always changing," explained one parent.

C. School practitioners' views

School practitioners perceived the curriculum as a major factor in disaffection, and their comments illuminated a number of dilemmas and tensions about the difficulties experienced by themselves as well as by their students. One set of comments was directed at the ways in which the pace and content of the curriculum aggravated the boredom and disengagement of some students. One individual explained, "Some children become bored." Another added, "There are too many topics to cover." Many agreed that pressures of time, inspection, and exams meant having to make sure that all the required topics were covered. A second set of comments concerned the pressures created by exams and targets. One teacher explained, "If your pay is going to be linked to your pupil results then it is in your best interest to get these

pupils to do as best as possible." Other curriculum-based dynamics described by school practitioners included difficulties with adapting the curriculum to fit an individual child's needs, or trying to help students who missed school to get caught up. One teacher stated, "If you are into the curriculum for children, you will do it somehow [but] at your own expense, and you will end up going to the doctor with stress."

At the secondary level, curriculum issues were perceived as creating greater constraints. The GCSE entitlement curriculum and national targets were frequently seen as a constraint and, in the view of our interviewees, the introduction of competition and league tables, with all their ancillary pressures and demands on teachers, had combined to create inappropriate demands on those pupils who have little interest in preparing for a world which does not interest them. Curriculum issues described by school practitioners at the secondary level included a felt pressure to prepare students for national assessments and tests, which meant that lessons at the secondary level often frequently focused on drills, review, revision, and mock exams. One primary teacher perceived that "high-ability children switch off ... when they go to secondary school ... a lot of our children come back and say they are doing the same thing and they cannot get motivated."

School practitioners' views about the impact of these pressures and dynamics of school disaffection revealed mixed opinions. Some headteachers saw a need to move back to a 1980s vocational curriculum and felt there were far too many students in the lower ability range following courses which were unsuitable, irrelevant or inappropriate. "Something else is needed for these pupils" was a frequent perception. Other teachers emphasised the need to provide a curriculum which would meet the interests and needs of those pupils. "Extended work experience is brilliant," was one comment, echoed by another headteacher, "Yes I'd agree. Thai and GNVQ [General National Vocational Qualification]. ... They have really helped to improved attendance, but they're not a panacea for everything."

Several headteachers spoke positively about the ways in which their schools had made changes to the curriculum and pedagogy to meet the needs of individual students whose experience of the school's standard offering had been one of failure and rejection. The introduction of GNVQs, with extended work experience, had worked well in a number of schools. Some schools had taken further steps including changes to the option system, extended links with tertiary colleges, expanded work experience and the introduction of flexible timetables for pupils. Curriculum was a key factor. Many teachers and headteachers

thought that the academic curriculum and targets for GCSE exams were appropriate, and that the curriculum needed modification.

4 ANALYSIS

The study reveals several areas of commonly-held views, as well as conflicting beliefs about what students, parents, and school practitioners perceive are the factors that influence how a student experiences school, and therefore can either reduce and aggravate disaffection.

A. Summary of major findings

A. Teachers can have a positive and negative influence on how students perceive and experience learning.

Students, parents, and school practitioners commonly perceived teachers as factors in describing a student's disaffection from school. Teachers – their personalities and their pedagogical methods -- were described to be particularly important, both negatively and positively affecting students' attitudes toward learning and their expectations.

❖ *Students and parents suggested that infrequent and negative parent-school communication; punitive forms of punishments; and a sanction-driven school behaviour policy had a negative impact on how students felt about school.*

Students and parents suggested that having positive and frequent communication between the school and a stable contact (e.g. a teacher or support worker) in school improved their motivation to engage in learning. Students, teachers, and parents raised similar questions about whether punishments commonly used in schools such as detention and isolation helped prevent disaffection or worsen it.

❖ *Students and school practitioners perceived a range of curriculum issues as aggravating student boredom and disillusionment.*

Students, teachers, and educational professionals felt that disinterest with the mainstream curriculum was aggravated by its pace, rigidity, and the number of topics. Parents did not tend to perceive the curriculum as a major factor, and seemed unaware of curriculum - based issues in general, suggesting an area for further exploration.

These areas of similar and differing perceptions raise a number of important questions and implications about the role and influence of teachers, schools, and the curriculum. While a wide range of individual views emerged about the specific kinds of teaching - and school-related factors that were most important, students and parents tended to agree more about the type of teacher and kind of school that has a positive influence on disaffection.

One area of difference appears to lie in how teachers and teaching are conceptualised. Students and parents suggested that teachers should be caring, friendly, and individually oriented in their interactions. However, school practitioners tended not to focus on these personal aspects of teachers, but suggested that other kinds of dispositions were important in responding to students who were disengaged. These included self-confidence, imaginativeness, and a willingness to take risks. Differences between secondary and primary school practitioners were particularly revealing, and suggest a need for further exploration. While primary teachers expressed concern about the lack of attention devoted by secondary teachers toward students' personal and individual needs; secondary practitioners indicated that the nature and structure of secondary schools required teachers to place greater emphasis on subjects and skills.

Secondly, students and parents tended to agree that a school that was warm, welcoming, emphasised rewards, was less punitive, and facilitated open and positive communication had a positive influence in reducing disaffection. Here again, while school practitioners did not disagree with this view, their comments revealed further conflicts and uncertainties about the extent to which it was possible to achieve this kind of school culture and policies desired by students and parents. Although the comments of several interviewees suggested some schools reflected such a culture; a significant number of teachers from other schools (both primary and secondary) suggested 1) it was hard to confront and shift colleagues' practices and expectations; and 2) it was difficult to change the school's culture of low expectations and negative labelling.

Finally, students and parents suggested that schools should operate more flexible forms of instruction and support, which are individually oriented in their approaches to students' difficulties. Yet, only a few school practitioners described having in place a system of school-based policies and supports aimed at helping providing struggling pupils with academic tutoring or to catch up on missing work. While school practitioners again did not disagree with the benefits of such supports, pedagogical methods, and a curriculum that was individually oriented, an overwhelming majority described feeling constrained from adopting and sustaining such practices. Constraints and barriers perceived by teachers included a) lack of time, b) administrative burdens, b) difficulty communicating with parents, c) uncooperative, negative colleagues, and 3) curriculum constraints and pressures.

Schools appear to operate on a number of worrying assumptions that conflict with the experiences and needs described by students and parents. One is that young people come to

school on time, daily, and with no interruptions to their learning. The reality, however, according to students and parents, is, far removed from this. For many students, learning was described to as a fragmented, inconsistent and interrupted experience for a range of reasons, some of which are to do with the absences and attitudes of students themselves. A second is that young people should conform to the school's pre-defined rules and structures, rather than count on the school to develop supports around their diverse needs. The implications of these assumptions might explain why schools and professionals appear to be making incremental changes to school discipline policy and looking for supports in the form of alternative curriculum to motivate learning; rather than consider making more difficult changes in pedagogy, the curriculum, and school structures. Such findings suggest a crucial need for dialogue between students, parents, and schools to improve the awareness and understanding of the needs of disenfranchised young people as learners.

B. Some key implications

These findings suggest that an important dimension of disaffection is, in fact, the experience of school itself, which both influences and is influenced by a range of teacher-, pedagogical-, school policy- and curriculum-based factors. In exploring these school-based aspects of school disaffection, these findings suggest that the problems and solutions for reducing disaffection lie with improving the local practices of schools, teachers, and teaching. However, the uncertainties, and to some degree, cynicism, expressed by school practitioners raises a number of worrying questions about the national context, and the barriers felt and perceived by schools and teachers.

One set of issues concern the policy pressures emanating from the system itself. These include not only the requirements of the national curriculum, but also the demands of national policies on testing, assessment, and inspection; all of which have been observed as reducing the flexibility, autonomy, and time of teachers. Teachers from both phases of schooling described that changes in the school's curriculum and increasing pressures to raise achievement had introduced new dilemmas about how they felt and perceived their role as teachers. The pressures being felt by schools might explain why some teachers felt unsure about whether it was their role to take an overall view of the student, or whether they needed to focus on the curriculum.

A second set of issues relates to how schools' organisational cultures and priorities are reflecting and changing in relation to the central government's requirements and priorities.

In our interviews with school practitioners, many described the current climate of schooling as being a key influence in how they viewed the problem of disaffection. Headteachers, for example, expressed concerns about the pressures being felt by staff from national school (OFSTED) inspection and other national requirements, such as testing and exams, which call for a "mass responses" and "blanket policies." Teachers described such pressures as giving them "little choice" and or flexibility to consider the individual needs and problems of students. The dynamics generated by a national system that looks firstly, at student results as evidenced by league tables (a school ranking system based primarily on student exam results) and secondly, on competition between schools suggests a conflicting set of pressures in terms of inclusion. On the one hand, schools and teachers need to improve their results and therefore attract students who can contribute to this goal. On the other hand, reducing disaffection appears to call for approaches and practices which conflict with raising achievement. As one teacher explained:

> If I have a class of thirty students, and one or two is having problems ... I have to weigh their needs with the rest of the pupils ... now if I have inspection coming up ... or assessments ... I can't afford to spend too much time with pupils ... I know they need help and a lot of attention. ... But it is a real dilemma.

Other teachers related similar dilemmas to the pressures of the curriculum and in preparing pupils for exams. One teacher said that she knew "exams made pupils stressed ... and disruptive behaviour increase ... but what can you do." Headteachers expressed similar concern and conflicts about the needs of pupils whose learning was disrupted by the behaviour of their peers. They also sympathized with the concerns of many parents who felt that "problem children" should not be allowed to spoil life for the majority.

A third set of issues relates to the wide variance in how schools and teachers view the needs of students and the extent to which they feel they have the capacity to prevent and combat disaffection. Our evidence suggests that students and parents believe that some teachers and schools are more effective and successful than others are in addressing and responding to disaffection. However, the factors that appear to influence school practitioners are complex. While students and parents expressed strong views about the kinds of teachers and school that they believe are needed to prevent and reduce disaffection; teachers and headteachers appear constrained by a range of perceived barriers and pressures. School practitioners suggest a need for more time for planning and reflection; greater flexibility with the curriculum; and improved training and professional development.

A fourth set of issues concerns the dynamics and incentives of the curriculum. In our study, students' views about future goals and career aspirations were strongly linked to how they felt about their achievement on national exams and tests. Students who did not think they were going to do well on did not appear highly motivated or interested in the content and requirements of the National Curriculum. A number of students suggested that, like their parents, they didn't need the curriculum or exams to get a job. Being disaffected and disenfranchised from the curriculum, in other words, might be interpreted as an unintended consequence of the wider system – while policymakers continue to measure success in terms of exam; few students appear to value or feel motivated by them. More crucially, suggestions for an alternative curriculum was viewed by some parents and young people as being "sub-standard," reinforcing the perception that they were "not clever enough."

The national climate and policies under which schools and teachers operate is a key factor in contextualizing the kinds of conflicts experienced by school practitioners. Students and parents appear to want a more caring and individualised approach to teaching and learning; but schools and teachers describe an enormous pressures to focus more on providing evidence of improved student results (e.g. tests and assessments). The current climate is one , which appears to sits uneasily with how school practitioners see their role in addressing disaffection and their task in raising achievement. Headteachers describe having to respond to a competing range of external government pressures and internal demands. Teachers say there is little time for reflection and a low tolerance for disruption. While these are issues that are being played out in classroom and at the local level, their wider causes appear to be aggravated by a national climate in which school practitioners feel their capacity to respond to disaffection is being constrained.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING POLICY AND PRACTICES[5]

Developing strategies that will successfully address the needs of a disenfranchised young person cannot simply comprise of nationally defined objectives and targets that schools, services, and agencies should strive to achieve. Rather, practices and policies should reflect the needs and desires of young people and parents. The nature of the UK's centralized educational system suggests that many changes have been initiated from the "top." However, the achievement of policy goals is far more meaningful when developed by practitioners from 'the ground up.' Such practices must then be supported by a foundation of local policies and systems, which are designed to reflect and adapt to practitioners' emerging needs. Based on our findings, we are wary, therefore, of local policy goals that are solely defined in terms of rigid numbers and national targets that are measured annually and must be met by a certain deadline. Rather, our recommendation is that the bringing disenfranchised young people back into learning requires bringing about changes in practices, beliefs, and attitudes.

A. Policy Recommendations

Thus, in terms of improving the climate and context in which disenfranchised young people experience school and education, we suggest two overarching goals for policymakers:

> *Policy Goal 1:* ***Raising the levels of awareness and understanding about the diverse needs and experiences of disenfranchised young people, as individuals and as learners.***
>
> *Policy Goal 2:* ***Changing and improving the practices of schools and agencies to respond to the needs of disenfranchised young people, their parents, and their communities.***

Central to the achievement of these goals is an important recognition: the pathway to achieving inclusion is, quite simply, about changing deep-rooted perceptions and traditional practices. We have thus outlined here a set of principles, which we have based on the findings of our study, and which might be helpful in guiding the development and implementation of local policy for inclusion:

- **Firstly, achieving inclusion** will require shifting the attitudes not only of pupils and parents, but also of professionals and teachers.

- **Secondly, initiating change at multiple and simultaneous levels** will require a system-wide and holistic approach, which will require better training, increased professional development, and ongoing forms of communication between all key stakeholders – parents, teachers, professionals working with schools, local policy-makers, and finally, pupils themselves.

- **Thirdly, clarifying goals and objectives** is a continuous process involving continuous monitoring and reflection. This will require a shared set of understandings about how to respond to the needs and experiences of disenfranchised young people.

- **Fourthly, building flexible, local systems that encourage inclusion** will be a long and hard process. It is thus necessary to start with improving the awareness and understanding of schools, agencies, practitioners, and professionals.

- **Finally, developing more inclusive ways of teaching and interacting with disenfranchised young people is a process that needs to be taken in partnership.** Rather than work in isolation, schools and agencies can be more effective when involving parents and the community. Networks between schools can also help improve the dissemination of information and encourage the exchange of successful practices.

B. Recommendations for Practice

We suggest four recommendation areas where future efforts might be directed to help bring about improvements in local practices and attitudes. These include: (1) addressing the culture, practices of schools, as well as improving the relationships between teachers and students; (2) improving pedagogy and curriculum; 3) creating structures that facilitate more open, frequent and positive communications between school practitioners, students, parents, and educational professionals; and (4) improving the quality and level of training and professional development of teachers and professionals to support the use of pedagogy and practices that are more responsive to the needs and desires of adolescents, parents, and their children.

1 - Improving the environment and practices of schools, and the pedagogy and attitudes of teachers.

This recommendation is aimed at promoting an inclusive culture of teaching and learning within schools. One of the strongest findings from our interviews with young people was of the powerful influence that teachers -- their style, methods, and personalities -- had on young people's perceptions of learning and their experiences in schools. Students outlined a range of strategies and areas of intervention that they felt had been helpful in reintegrating them back into school and re-engaging them in learning, or which they perceived could bring about

those changes. These strategies were similar to practices described by teachers who felt that their school was particularly successful and effective at reducing disaffection and exclusion (Rustique-Forrester, in progress). These included skilled and innovative teaching; mentoring and supportive relationships with adults; more academically oriented support; and a school environment based on rewards, not punishments. The students we interviewed suggested a number of school-based changes that they believed could improve their schools. Similarly, the parents we interviewed desperately also made a number of suggestions about what could be done to tackle the problems of school disaffection. These are shown below in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1
Recommended Areas for School-Based Change, By Perspective

Students	Parents	School practitioners
▪ Smaller classes ▪ Improved physical conditions ▪ More say for students in how schools are run ▪ Teachers who listen to pupils rather than talk at them ▪ Teachers who are more aware of the problems students face outside school ▪ More practical subjects in school, such as engineering or woodwork ▪ Encouragement for teachers and pupils to respect each other ▪ Help with schoolwork provided to pupils who had missed school ▪ More informal ways of learning offered both inside and outside school ▪ More challenging lessons	▪ More frequent and more positive communications between parents, teachers and pupils ▪ An intermediary between schools and parents/pupils who can speak up for the pupils ▪ Earlier identification of the causes of misbehaviour and earlier intervention ▪ Greater co-operation between parents, teachers and pupils to resolve problems ▪ A more positive approach from schools towards students	▪ More professional development opportunities to enable them to recognise and understand differences in learning styles and address and adapt curriculum according to pupils' individual needs ▪ More time with individual pupils ▪ A rewards-based school culture and supportive learning environment ▪ Counselling, peer support, mentoring opportunities for pupils ▪ More flexible approaches to learning and the curriculum ▪ Tackling the problems of disaffected teachers

Though the parents we interviewed were not always clear about what caused their child's disaffection from school; the majority believed that, in almost all cases, a caring and empathetic teaching staff and positive communication within schools greatly reduced their child's problems

from escalating, According to the parents, problems arose when their child was labelled, and did not look sufficiently into whether the child had learning difficulties, or in some cases, whether he or she was being bullied. When their child experienced a personal difficulty with a teacher, parents wanted to be supportive, but did suggested that pathways and lines of communication were at best, unclear or haphazard; at worst, closed and negative.

Teachers and professionals working in schools suggest that a truly inclusive learning environment is one that is supported not only by a range of school, teaching, and learning strategies but is also held up by a whole-school ethos and culture which defines success and learning in a wide sense. This suggest that given the national policy climate, where the indicators for achievement are defined on the basis of exams and tests, schools and teachers might consider defining success more widely, by developing additional ways of encouraging young people's personal achievement and progress in a range of areas and interests.

2 – Improving the interactions and relationships between teachers and students.

According to many young people, the motivation to learning was influenced and could be enhanced by more positive relationships with teachers. Put bluntly, young people explained that the classes they were least likely to skip and were most likely to enjoy were those taught by teachers they liked. Such findings suggest that developing inclusive practice is not only about adapting the curriculum to respond to pupils' individual or special educational needs, but more crucially about building better relationships with pupils. We found that a major area for improvement in schools is recognising and helping teachers to interact more positively with young people on a daily basis.

However, it is simplistic to suggest that teachers need only to be friendlier with pupils to re-engage them in school. Indeed, a teacher's relationship and interaction with his or her pupils is a complex arena, dependent upon and shaped by a range of issues such as the curriculum as well as the conditions in which teachers work and communicate with each other. In our interviews with primary and secondary teachers, teachers identified a number of factors that promoted more positive interactions with pupils – time for planning, professional development, guidance and leadership from senior management, and communication from other colleagues.

While every teacher may have an individual style and personality, the school's own policies and ethos can also shape how he or she respond to and interact with a student. The

curriculum, too, can exert a key influence on the extent to which teachers feel they can provide individual help and support to those students who are struggling to keep up with the pressures and pace of exams. How schools can adapt the curriculum, as well as how teachers make accessible. Projects aimed at providing an alternative curriculum; however, this was not seen as a solution for pupils – they felt they were still failures, not capable of achieving GCSE's.

3- Improving the level and quality of communication between schools, students, and parents.

The suggestion that more positive forms of communication are needed to address the problems of disaffection featured strongly across all perspectives. Yet, individuals perceived a number of similar barriers that constrained communication, or reinforced a negative attitude toward school, learning, and teachers.. Our findings revealed that one of the biggest barriers between parents and schools are the deeply rooted views that schools hold about disenfranchised young people and their families. In our research, young people and their parents expressed the belief that negative stereotyping and labelling reinforced the lack of communication between parents and schools. Teachers, too, tended to perceive the parents of disaffected pupils as being uninterested in their child's education. School staff described enormous difficulties getting parents to attend meetings or parents' evenings. Removing the barriers to positive communication requires more structured opportunities through which schools and teachers can share information and also discuss the needs of young people in a way that is viewed as non-humiliating and non-judgmental. This requires schools, teachers, and professional to focus not simply on the problems and symptoms of disaffection, but on areas of strengths and potential progress.

4 – Providing more better preparation and training for teachers and professionals

According to school practitioners, professional development opportunities and the tim e and space to work with individual pupils are key. However, as a result of the increase in administrative duties, and the pressure from the curriculum and testing, teachers feel that they have little time to reflect on their practices and limited opportunities to discuss with other colleagues about strategies which are working, as well as those that are not. Teachers and pupils welcome opportunities, such as mentoring, which enable them to focus on small group of pupils. Paying closer attention to what was happening to individual students has huge payoffs for both pupils and teachers. It enables teachers to recognise and understand

differences in learning styles and to address and adapt curriculum according to pupils' individual needs and it enables students to benefit from individual care and attention and to feel wanted rather than rejected in the school.

C. Final thoughts

Policymakers as well as practitioners must recognise that for many young people, adolescence is a fragile time, and requires a learning environment which provides stable and trusting relationships, as well as experiences which enable a sense of independence and individual achievement (see e.g. Feldman and Elliiot, 1990). Schools need to build-in structural supports and arrangements to reduce fragmented learning and to ensure that children who return to school after a period of absence, for whatever reason, are welcomed and catered for. This related point raises the need to foster a sense of lifelong learning to improve students' motivation to attend or stay in school. This is particularly crucial for those who are disenfranchised, and who see very few options for themselves and their future.

The strategy of the past two decades in the UK has been to reform the curriculum, and make uniform for schools the goals and targets that all students should achieve. However, our findings suggest that solutions need to consider issues of pedagogy, address the diversity of individual needs, and promote a range of learning experiences that can encourage a range of work and career-related aspirations. That current options for further education are based largely on exams is an assumption that needs further examination. The assumption is that this current curriculum structure provide students with incentives to attend school in order to achieve exams, however, it appears that for some students, it is may be reinforcing the notion that school is actually a barrier to beginning work.

Teachers, pupils and parents alike recognise the growing demands and pressures on teachers. However, within this climate of mutual recognition, there are also frustrations. Both students and parents see teachers – the ability to develop meaningful relationships with students, their pedagogical competence, their knowledge and enthusiasm for their subject, the ways in

which they interpreted the curriculum – as having an impact on their own approach to classroom learning. In their view teachers as central to improving schools, but teachers needed to be given more time to do the job better, and to have the opportunity to experience training opportunities geared at enabling them to develop their skills: a view supported by the teacher themselves.

In our quest to understand better the complex dynamics of disaffection, we have uncovered a number of dilemmas and tensions experienced by students, parents, teachers, and schools. Although our findings are based in the UK, our hope is that these issues we have raised will resonate to other educational systems. The fact that students, parents and school practitioners expressed both similar and different opinions about the experience and dynamics of disaffection may not be surprising. However, the ways in which these each of these perspectives view **the solution for reducing disaffection** raises a number of interesting, cross-cultural issues about how best to address the needs of disenfranchised young people.

Our study suggests that factors at the school and teacher level are crucial in addressing effectively the needs of disenfranchised young people; however, the external pressures and dynamics of national policies also play an equally important role. Tackling disaffection, in other words, is both a micro- and macro- problem, with a local, school-based and national, educational policy-based context. Both aspects are critical in shaping the specific context and circumstances under which an individual, disenfranchised or not, experiences school and education. While students and parents perceive more acutely the micro-level practices of schools and teachers as being a significant factor, the wider policies that shape ho w schools and teachers function is also significant in what happens to any young person.

Bringing disenfranchised young people back into learning requires a rethinking of the basic assumptions that underlie many schools' and teachers' daily practices. However, devising any solution for tackling disaffection, whether they are practice-oriented or policy-based, requires a systemic view. At the school level, combating disaffection calls for changes in individual attitudes, perceptions, and practices. Howev er, the extent to which individuals and institutions (i.e. teachers and schools) can initiate and sustain the necessary changes will depend on the ability of policymakers to resolve the conflicts created by the system itself, and to reconcile these, first and foremost, with the needs students, parents, and school practitioners.

APPENDIX A

Summary of Issues and Themes Raised by Students, Parents, School Practitioners, and Educational Professionals

School-based issues	***PERSPECTIVE EXPLORED***			
Features and characteristics of schools perceived and described as having an influence (positive and negative) for disenfranchised young people.	*Pupil*	*Parent*	*School practitioner*	*Education professional*
SCHOOL-BASED SUPPORT Lack of adequate, school-based support for family / personal difficulties				
EXTERNAL PRESSURES Pressures and demands from the system				
SCHOOL POLICIES Behavioural policy, punishments				
SCHOOL MANAGEMENT Leadership issues				
SCHOOL CULTURE / ETHOS School values, relationships				
COMMUNICATION & INFORMATION Use of information				
SCHOOLPHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT Condition of school building and classrooms				
SCHOOL RESOURCES Availability and allocation of funds				
Teacher-related issues				
Aspects of teaching and the teacher perceived as being important or relevant in reducing or aggravating disaffection				
PEDAGOGY Poor teaching & disaffected teachers Knowledge of subject				
PERSONALITY				
NATURE OF INTERACTION				
STYLE OF BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT				
INTERACTION AND ATTITUDES TOWARD STUDENTS				
School curriculum, policies, programs				

Areas of the curriculum perceived as needing change				
CURRICULUM				
Inappropriate and inaccessible curriculum				
SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT				
Changing schools' and teachers' practices				
Changing teachers' classroom practices				
Developing more innovative &inclusive approaches to teaching				
Improving management of senior and middle managers				
Improving communication skills of teachers				
Whole-school approaches of improvement				
SCHOOL POLICIES				
Bullying				
Buildings & facilities				
Increasing pupils' participation in school decisions				
Transfer / transition between primary and secondary				
Changing school behavioural policies				
SCHOOL STRUCTURES				
Homework support				
Lifelong learning				
External agencies				
Ways in which external agencies and professionals were viewed and perceived as having a positive impact on disenfranchised young people				
Supporting schools with external packages and professional assistance:				
Packaged programmes, (e.g Valued Youth);				
Required reporting and monitoring				
Additional staff and resources (e.g. learning support teacher)				
Targeting specific / holistic needs of individual counselling				
mentoring (e.g. SRB)				
wider range of curriculum and learning experiences (e.g work experience)				

Increasing community role				
parental involvement in education (e.g Parents as Educators)				
wider range of agencies in earlier forms of intervention (e.g. GRIP)				

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Notes

[1] Several reports have documented the link between students being excluded from school and a greater likelihood to commit crime (e.g. Audit Commission, 2000)

[2] K.A. Riley, J. Docking, and D. Rowles (1999). Can local educational authorities make a difference? The perception of users and providers. *Educational Management and Administration, 27, 1,* pp. 29 -44.

[3] For example, LEAs have been required by the central government (DfEE) to demonstrate how, through their Education Development Plans (EDPs) will ensure that school targets will be met. Other national initiatives being implemented locally include the "New Deal," which seeks to provide further education and training opportunities for young people over the age of 16; and "Education Action Zones (EAZs), which are made up of clusters of primary, secondary, and special schools working in partnership with the local educational authority, local businesses, and other social, health, and community services. (e.g. Riley and Watling, 1999)

[4] A separate study on the "Role and Effectiveness of the LEA" in which Northernshire participated revealed some critical issues about practices and approaches to inclusion (See Riley, Docking, and Rowles 1998a, 1998b, and 2000).

[5] This discussion draws from a separate policy report entitled, *Bringing Disenfranchised Young People Back Into the Frame: Implications for Policy into Practice* (Centre for Educational Management, November 2000). This report was written and prepared for the LEA and describes our full set of recommendations for improving LEA policy and school practices in relation to school disaffection.